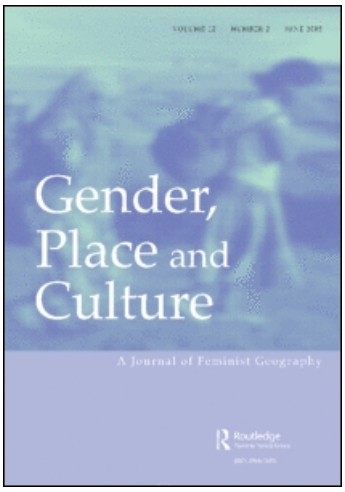
This article was downloaded by: *[Harris, Leila M.]*
On: *7 July 2009*
Access details: *Access Details: [subscription number 912938583]*
Publisher *Routledge*
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Gender, Place & Culture
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713423101

Gender and emergent water governance: comparative overview of neoliberalized natures and gender dimensions of privatization, devolution and marketization

Leila M. Harris [a]
[a] University of Wisconsin, Department of Geography and Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, Madison WI, USA

Online Publication Date: 01 August 2009

To cite this Article Harris, Leila M.(2009)'Gender and emergent water governance: comparative overview of neoliberalized natures and gender dimensions of privatization, devolution and marketization',Gender, Place & Culture,16:4,387 — 408
To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/09663690903003918
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09663690903003918

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Gender, Place and Culture
Vol. 16, No. 4, August 2009, 387–408

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Gender and emergent water governance: comparative overview of neoliberalized natures and gender dimensions of privatization, devolution and marketization

Leila M. Harris*

University of Wisconsin, Department of Geography and Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, 550 North Park Street, Madison WI, 53706-1404, USA

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

This article provides a critical reading of some of the gendered dimensions of emergent water governance regimes, specifically those related to the privatization, marketization and devolution of water resources management. After first providing an overview of recent nature–society contributions related to neoliberalization processes, the article comparatively evaluates insights with respect to the gender dimensions of recent shifts in water governance. I make several arguments at the intersection of relevant literatures. First, there is a need for gender theorists interested in water resources and nature–society debates to engage more with issues, theories and processes associated with neoliberalization. Second, there is a need for more attention to gender, feminist theory and approaches to inequality and socio-spatial difference in discussions of neoliberalized natures. Third, reading these literatures together reveals that there is a need to be self-reflexive and critical of elements of the gender and water literature that implicitly endorse foundational elements of the neoliberal turn in resource governance. Finally, there are particularities with respect to gender theory and politics, and water materialities that hold importance for understanding recent water governance shifts in the broader context of political and economic changes associated with neoliberalization.

Keywords: gender; water governance; neoliberalization; privatization; devolution

Introduction: towards gender analyses of neoliberalized natures

While there is a tremendous body of literature focused on gender and water spanning several decades, there is relatively little that expressly interrogates recent neoliberalization shifts that are increasingly central to emergent water governance across scales. Similarly, while in the neoliberalized natures literature a good deal of interest has been given to the socio-natural implications of current neoliberalized resource governance (including attention to water), there has yet to be adequate discussion of the gender dimensions of these changes. This article fills these gaps. My aim is to explore neoliberalization shifts in water governance from a gender perspective to highlight what such an analysis lends to 'gender and water' and 'neoliberalized nature' debates, and to argue for the need for enhanced cross-fertilization between these literatures.

I invoke *neoliberalization* with respect to water governance to refer most notably to the devolution of water management (e.g. from centralized to more local management),

*Email: lharris@geography.wisc.edu

ISSN 0966-369X print/ISSN 1360-0524 online
© 2009 Taylor & Francis
DOI: 10.1080/09663690903003918
http://www.informaworld.com

democratization (attempts to more fully engage communities in participatory resource management), commodification (attempts to use market instruments and pricing more fully in water provision), and privatization of water resources (engagement of the private sector in water infrastructure development and service provision). While all of these trends are *commonly* associated with neoliberalization shifts, each of these changes need not *necessarily* be associated with neoliberal ideals or processes (see Bakker 2007).

Indeed, as I will argue, it may be problematic to lump these trends together (Bakker 2003, 2005). As specified below, these diverse elements are unfolding unevenly in both the global North and South, and may have varied or contradictory effects, particularly depending on the institutional, ecological and socio-political context. Thus, while all are commonly associated with neoliberalization, these elements should not be thought of as a single set of governance shifts or as having unitary effects. Even as others have raised concerns related to the uneasy relationship between these processes and the concept of 'neoliberalism' (Castree 2006), I make the argument that this term (together with insights from associated literatures) provides a useful starting point to understand major shifts in water governance of the past several decades.

Reading the 'neoliberalized natures' and 'gender and water' literatures together, I argue that there is need for more attention to be paid to complex and multi-scalar neoliberalization shifts among theorists of gender and water, for instance to explore the coincidence of privatization and participatory resource governance trends as they unfold together in various contexts. Conversely, there is also a need for greater focus on gender, inequality and social difference in discussions of neoliberalized natures. Further, the examination of these literatures together reveals that there is a degree to which elements of the gender and water literature implicitly endorse and mirror many of the assumptions that underwrite the neoliberalization of resource governance. Finally, and less significantly, there are particularities with respect to *gender theory and politics*, as well as *water*, that hold importance for broader debates related to neoliberalized natures and political ecologies of resource governance.

To make these points, I proceed as follows. First, I provide an overview of analyses related to the neoliberalization of nature, highlighting some recent interventions and contours of these debates, including calls for future work that are of particular interest to the themes of this article. Second, I detail findings that connect gender concerns to neoliberalization trends in water governance. As democratized resource governance and participatory management have been major preoccupations of the gender and water literature to date, there is ample detail related to devolution and democratization shifts. However, there has not yet been sufficient attention paid to other elements of neoliberalization trends, specifically commodification, privatization and marketization of water. In the fourth section, I discuss several elements of the broader gender/water and gender/nature literatures that implicitly endorse, mirror and substantiate assumptions that underwrite neoliberalization trends. As should be clear from the discussion that follows, given that neoliberalism in many ways relies on the *naturalization* of certain notions of citizenship, market and state, this sort of endorsement is significant. This critique constitutes a central contribution of the article with the intent of encouraging rethinking of key assumptions and policy prescriptions. I consider this to be necessary to maintain spaces for alternative political, economic and governance possibilities, rather than naturalizing neoliberal prescriptions. The critique also provides a basis for the claim that there is a need for more discussion across these literatures. In the concluding section, I consider what this article suggests for broader debates, particularly those related to neoliberalism and resource governance more generally.

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

Neoliberalized natures

Among hotly debated topics in recent nature–society theory are issues related to the neoliberalization of nature, connecting political economy approaches (e.g. Peck 2001, 2004; Peck and Tickell 2002) to analyses of resource conditions, access and governance (see Heynen et al. 2007, for overview). While neoliberalism eludes a concise definition, the concept operates as shorthand for the *ideologies, networks and institutions that further the implementation of market-oriented policies*. This necessarily entails a number of linked efforts, such as the dismantling of regulatory structures or the reconfiguring of state institutions to support particular market operations.[1] Examinations of neoliberalism also necessarily entail focus on ideological and discursive infrastructure that supports particular visions of state–market–society relations. For instance, scholars seeking to better understand neoliberalization shifts have focused their analyses on ideals of efficiency and free market capitalism or on the consolidation of new self-reliant citizen subjectivities (Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard 2006; Katz 2005; Raco 2005; Mitchell 2004; Rankin 2001).

As numerous overviews on the topic have made clear, neoliberalism should *not* be thought of as a single ideal or coherent policy but rather is a continually evolving, hybrid and complex set of policies, discourses and practices (see Peck and Tickell 2002; Peck 2001, 2004, for overviews). Theorists point to several interlinked phases of neoliberalism – e.g. '*roll-back*' of state services, '*roll-out*' of specific policies to further capitalist investment and market penetration and '*deep neoliberalism*', the entrenchment of uneven regulatory development to further these processes (see Brenner, Peck and Theodore forthcoming; Tickell and Peck 2003). It is also increasingly emphasized that neoliberalism necessarily varies depending on historical and institutional context (e.g. in response to specific crises of the post-Keynesian welfare state or in relation to post-colonial conditions, Brenner, Peck and Theodore forthcoming; Tickell and Peck 2003). As Lind (2002) explains, neoliberalism might be best understood as a political strategy focused on market ideologies, although it is always conditioned by context specificities in terms of how this unfolds or takes root. Indeed, recent arguments by Brenner, Peck and Theodore (forthcoming) suggest that more attention needs to be paid to the evolution, differentiation and maintenance of diverse neoliberalisms across space and through time – 'variegated neoliberalisms'.

While *neoliberalism* refers to the ideologies and institutions associated with the political–economic project to further commodification and market rule, *neoliberalization* refers to the practices, processes and networks through which these ideals and policies are promoted and unfold. With scholars noting discomfort with discussions that treat neoliberalism as a 'thing' that can be understood in a straightforward sense (see discussions in Castree 2006; Peck 2004; and Larner 2003), many prefer to discuss *neoliberalization*, particularly to analyze those policies and practices that have the effect of *naturalizing* particular relationships between state, market and citizens.[2] Specific policies associated with neoliberalization of resource governance include devolution of management responsibility to local communities, instituting cost recovery for services or privatization and commodification of resources (see Heynen et al. 2007 for an overview of neoliberalized natures, or Tickell and Peck 2003 for a more complete list of the types of policies associated with neoliberalization generally). There is extensive evidence of the neoliberalization of resource governance, manifest in the provision of water in England and Wales (Bakker 2005), in sustainable development oriented institutions and discourses (Raco 2005), or in wetlands mitigation banking or fisheries management in North America (Robertson 2004; and Mansfield 2006 respectively). This is only a subset of a range of studies of the past decade that have connected

theories of neoliberalism to 'nature' and resource issues, much of it from North American, Australian and European contexts. Studies from less-developed sites are increasingly available, particularly from Latin America (e.g. Liverman and Vilas 2006; Bennett, Davila-Poblete, and Rico 2005; Boelens and Zwarteveen 2005; Perrault and Martin 2005; Martin 2005). Even with the proliferation of such works, analyses of more sites, especially from the global South, as well as comparative analyses that connect processes across sites (North–South or South–South in particular), remain urgently needed.[3]

Apart from the need to understand how neoliberalization discourses and trends are affecting resource use, access, management and conditions, contributions from nature–society perspectives have also invited reconsideration of the key elements of the scholarly debate. For instance, contributions have indicated ways that logics of market approaches are incomplete and flawed, given the complexities inherent to nature–society and resource issues – as with discussion of failures of neoliberal approaches vis-à-vis fisheries provided by Mansfield (2006) or the ways that marketization of water rights do not lead to effects anticipated by planners, according to Ahlers (2002). In this regard, there have been key interventions that interrogate the ways that nature materialities play into the specific articulations and crises of neoliberalization (Bakker and Bridge 2006; Prudham 2004). Given the necessity of resources for livelihood securities, nature–society examples have also yielded some of the most pronounced examples of resistance against extensions of neoliberalism, for instance, with the 'Water Wars' in Cochabamba, Bolivia or with resistance to water privatization in Argentina (Bennett, Davila-Poblete, and Rico 2005) and Ghana (Amena-Etego and Grusky 2005).

Given the multiplicities, complexities and difficulties associated with neoliberalized natures (e.g. Castree 2006; Larner 2003), why might analytics associated with these discussions nonetheless provide useful starting points from which to evaluate gender dimensions of shifting water governance trends of the past several decades? This analysis shares the view of Peck (2004), Heynen et al. (2007) and others that there remains an imperative to attend to the pervasiveness of these shifts, including a focus on what Peck refers to as 'family resemblances'. This includes cross-scalar and cross-contextual connections, as well as the institutions and networks that serve to promote and entrench neoliberalization shifts (prime examples are the efforts of international financial institutions, see Goldman 2007 for an example of the ways that the World Bank has been crucial to evolving policy debates, institutions and expert networks related to water governance). I maintain that there are several compelling reasons to center the analysis of gender dimensions of water governance shifts on themes highlighted by this burgeoning subfield. One such reason is that water governance has been a realm where some of the most drastic 'neoliberal' changes have occurred in the past several decades, including devolution of water management to communities, increased commodification of water sectors and rapid privatization of water service provision (even as privatized water delivery remains a relatively small percentage of water provision overall)[4] (see Goldman 2007; Bakker 2005; Budds and McGranaham 2003 for overviews). Another reason is that somewhat distinct from forestry, mining or other sectors, the water realm is dominated by several large private firms that have proven to be particularly influential in furthering these shifts in international agreements and water policy circles. The five top water firms (Suez-Lyonnaise des Eaux, Vivendi and SAUR International in France, Thames Water in Britain and Bechtel from the US) are currently responsible for over 80% of global private water service delivery (Goldman 2007; indeed the top two, Suez and Vivendi control over 70%). Third, as discussed elsewhere (e.g. Bakker 2003; Sneddon et al. 2002), given the importance of water for diverse socio-natural processes, neoliberalization shifts in this

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

realm may be of particular concern for ethical debates or socio-political goals. As examples from Bennett, Davila-Poblete, and Rico (2005) suggest with respect to water privatization in Latin America, focusing on market based principles may clash with historical, cultural and social imageries that valorize social equity or water security. This is precisely why examples related to water privatization are littered with pronounced crises and widespread social protest, particularly in the global South (Bennett, Davila-Poblete, and Rico 2005; Amena-Etego and Grusky 2005). Finally, the neoliberalized natures literature, in particular, has been a fruitful ground to explore the interconnected, albeit multiple, contradictory and hybridized pathways of neoliberalization trends, including their potential limits. This is potentially useful for gender and feminist analyses struggling to rectify the ambiguity associated with some of neoliberalism's 'goods' (democratization, participatory management), with other potential gender regressive elements associated with these political, economic and governance changes.[5]

While 'nature' and 'environment' are realms where protest and resistance to neoliberalization trends have proven to be particularly pronounced, McCarthy (2005a) cautions that the realm of 'environmental politics' should not be thought of as external to neoliberal discourses and practices, and indeed, may reinforce foundational elements of such.[6] Using the example of community forestry (CF) in the US he argues that discourses and practices associated with the movement endorse many of the foundational elements of neoliberalism. For instance, CF and neoliberalism share the idea that states are unable to effectively manage forests and that the community is the only effective option for forestry management. As a consequence, CF discourses must be read not merely as oppositional to neoliberalism, but also serve to uphold some of neoliberalism's discursive and ideological foundations. This is an issue I pick up in the section on silent complicities in the gender and water debate below. There I detail ways in which discourses and policy prescriptions from the gender and water literature implicitly naturalize and reinforce neoliberalization processes.

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

Gender and neoliberalized natures: devolution, privatization, commodification

Given the considerable and growing attention being paid to neoliberalized natures, as well as the extent to which shifts associated with devolution, privatization and commodification are taking hold in water governance across contexts, it is surprising that there has not been more attention given to these issues from scholars concerned with the links between gender, inequality and water resources. By and large the gender and water literature has remained focused on how to involve women more fully in water institutions and governance, as well as offering suggestions as to the value of doing so, whether for sustainability, equity or other concerns. Given the broad remit of gender and feminist approaches beyond concerns related to the involvement of women, coupled with the increasing importance of neoliberalization trends for water governance, there is an urgent need to take up these questions more centrally. For instance, as Peterson (2005) argues, gender approaches can help to re-theorize and critically challenge operating assumptions and foundational principles of social or political–economic dynamics (e.g. notions of public vs. private central to citizenship debates, or ideals related to productivity that might valorize particular notions of masculinity). As Bakker (2003) writes, given that political ecological approaches often focus on inequalities, studies of this type have great potential to provide insights related to neoliberalization trends. Questions of socio-political and economic inequality are also issues for which gender and feminist approaches, and feminist political ecology in particular, are also especially well-suited. While I am

suggesting that processes of neoliberalization have not yet been adequately addressed by those focused on 'gender and environment', or 'gender and water' specifically, there have been several notable exceptions (Bennett, Davila-Poblete, and Rico 2005; Ahlers 2002; Zwarteveen 1998). I will first sketch the several contributions that have tackled these questions head-on before addressing some of the implicit suggestions from related literatures to detail why these shifts may be important from a gender perspective.

Key insights related to neoliberalized water governance, gender and inequality

Among works that have directly addressed neoliberalization related shifts in water governance from a gender perspective, the contributions in Bennett, Davila-Poblete and Rico (2005) are particularly notable examples. Analyzing implementation of the 'Dublin Principles'[7] in Latin American contexts, authors in this volume deal with some of the tensions between the third Dublin principle (recognizing that women play a central role in water provision and management) and the fourth (recognizing that water has economic value and should be considered as an economic good). The chapters deal with issues related to women's participation, tensions between basic needs and commodified approaches to water provision, and protest and resistance to privatization attempts. Consider the contribution by Ahlers (2005), which draws on comparative work from Mexico and Bolivia. Neoliberal reforms in both countries included the establishment of water markets, enhanced reliance on pricing, increasingly viewing water as an economic good, decentralization of water management to more local scales and participation of stakeholders in water governance. Her case-study work suggests that an enhanced focus on notions of efficiency has had the effect of overshadowing other goals, including social equity. As a consequence, Ahlers argues that the introduction of market mechanisms in the water sector perpetuates and legitimizes unequal gender access to water. In the concluding chapter, Bennett and her co-editors note other tensions. For instance, they suggest that privatization or commercialization often do not serve the needs of the entire population, and highlight the possibility that devolution does not necessarily or effectively engage all community members in democratic water management. They note that neoliberal policies are too often implemented as 'one size fits all' with little consideration given to context, and, further, that when water is established as an economic good, market mechanisms tend to dominate policy frameworks in ways that foreclose other options. Again, while the diverse policies and practices associated with neoliberalized water governance are not necessarily linked, these case studies reinforce the fact that they often unfold together in complicated and contradictory ways.

In a separate contribution Ahlers (2002) discusses other gender issues related to the neoliberalization of water governance. Drawing again on the Mexico example, she documents ways that privatization encourages shifts to more 'efficient' uses, including high value crops such as cotton, devaluing other crops that might be more subsistence-based or that might serve domestic needs. Following from the formalization of privatized land and water rights instituted with legal reforms of the early 1990s (including the 1992 Water Law), informal mechanisms through which women had previously accessed water were effectively overridden, resulting in a dismantling of community organizations and the effective disenfranchisement of women from land and water resources.

Zwarteveen's (1998) earlier contribution also considers the gender dimensions of recent shifts related to water management, specifically the implementation of Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT).[8] Highlighting theoretical insights from feminist economics, she notes risks associated with policies that do not assume women to be water users or that

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

assume equal ability to pay among populations. Among other concerns, she notes that women's unpaid contributions to the economy and other non-market activity may challenge notions of 'efficiency' and other assumptions that underwrite contemporary shifts in water management. While she argues that there is a sufficient theoretical basis to be concerned about gender exclusions proceeding with IMT implementation, Zwarteveen considers the empirical data related to these shifts to be inconclusive. Because issues of social equity are rarely included in evaluations of ongoing governance shifts, there remains an insufficient basis upon which to conclude whether such concerns are actually borne out in various contexts. As she writes, as yet there is 'not enough empirical data available to assess whether IMT programs are a threat or an opportunity to gender equity' (Zwarteveen 1998, 309).

Ahlers' (2002) discussion noted above provides one response to this lacuna, offering empirical details to document the challenges faced by women attempting to secure land and water rights following the Mexican land and water reforms of the early 1990s. Those concerned with gender equity might have celebrated these reforms as women were granted formal rights to land and water as part of the changes. However, Ahlers notes that women were effectively disenfranchised in relatively short order, losing customary access and often selling their rights off at prices markedly less than their male counterparts. She attributes this rapid selling off of rights by women and other impoverished farmers to the uncertain agricultural livelihoods in Mexico during this time period. To make matters worse, the selling of these rights also led to a pattern of rights consolidation in the hands of a few, resulting in broad-based disenfranchisement of rural agriculturalists from essential land and water resources. Thus, even though informal and customary access is far from ideal, nevertheless such mechanisms were more effective at maintaining access for women and the poor over relatively long time periods. While the examples offered by these theorists are insightful, this is still a very limited basis from which to assess gender dimensions of ongoing water governance shifts. Although not explicitly engaged with neoliberalization shifts or debates, other contributions from the broader literature help to illuminate important considerations.

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

Democratization, devolution and participation

The issue that has been most central to the 'gender and water' literature to date relates to women's participation in water management institutions (e.g. Prokopy 2004; Meinzen-Dick and Zwarteveen 2003; Meinzen-Dick and Knox 2001; Manase et al. 2003). Thus there is an ample array of case studies from which we can better understand and contextualize elements of neoliberalized water management that relate to devolution, democratization and participatory governance.

In brief, much of this extensive literature assesses whether women are participating in water management institutions, what formal and informal obstacles block women's effective participation and possibilities for overcoming these impediments (for instance, quotas for female participation, rule changes, suggestions as to how meetings could be run differently). While these studies consistently operate from the position that women's participation in resource management is important and desirable, there are some notable differences among authors with respect to *why* this is considered to be the case. Among the reasons most commonly noted, it is frequently suggested that women's participation in resource governance is essential to improve their status and promote gender equity (Upadhyay 2003; Lobo and Samuel 2001; Devasia 1998). Other works suggest that women's participation will resolve a number of other concerns, from better

enforcement potential (Rao 2001; Sarin 1995) to improved resource conditions and sustainability (Upadhyay 2003; Lobo and Samuel 2001). To give one example, Upadhyay (2003) has written several articles that argue that failure to include women undermines the success and sustainability of water management efforts. To include women results in empowerment, she suggests, with improved confidence and enhanced sense of self-reliance among female participants. While this is one of many examples of works that represent the linkages between these issues as very straightforward (e.g. involving women will lead to sustainability and/or empowerment), there is a fair body of work that casts issues of participation, democratization and devolution in a much more mixed light, reflecting parallels with discussions of neoliberalism as hybrid and contradictory.

Among scholars who are attentive to such complexities, Kulipossa (2004) notes that the evidence with respect to participation is inconclusive, challenging suggestions that decentralization necessarily leads to improved management, sustainability or project success (see also Prokopy 2004). As such, these contributions to the 'gender and water' literature reflect conclusions from devolution studies that we must avoid facile assumptions that local scale or devolved resource management mechanisms necessarily lead to improved outcomes (Ribot 1999, 2006). There is a need to be particularly attentive to capacities of women or communities to assume governance roles, especially as devolution frequently entails shifts from state to civil society responsibility without necessary resources or capacities (see Cornwall and Gaventa 2001; Ferguson and Malwafu 2001). As Lahiri-Dutt (2003) cautions, to involve women in resource management without providing tools or knowledge to enable them to fulfill new responsibilities does not 'empower' women at all.[9] These sorts of examples provide needed correctives to approaches that assume decentralization and democratization or enhanced women's participation necessarily promote poverty alleviation, equity or sustainability in straightforward senses. Rather than celebrating 'participation', 'community involvement' or 'devolution' *writ large*, it is critical to consider a number of key questions. Among them: what are the precise mechanisms through which devolution is achieved (cf. McCarthy 2005b); what are the multiple and intersectional 'participatory exclusions' that may proceed with devolved, democratic or 'participatory' approaches (Agarwal 2001, see also Harris 2005); or what might participatory approaches enable and foreclose (cf. Boelens and Zwarteveen 2005)?[10] As devolution and participatory management shifts occur in ways that are consistent with the third Dublin principle, with the imperatives of neoliberalism and with the efforts of major development planning and lending agencies, the issues raised by this literature in terms of exclusions and limits of participatory management are increasingly apposite.

Fuller engagement with neoliberalization debates would also benefit these discussions considerably. Among other possibilities, this rapprochement might encourage further examination of risks and contradictory outcomes that may accompany benefits associated with devolution and participation shifts. There could also be more attention paid to the specific institutions, contexts and pathways wherein devolution and participatory management might be more consistent with goals of democratic governance (Ngware and Ngware 2004), equity or resource sustainability goals. Yet another promising direction for further work at this interface is to evaluate complexities associated with devolution and democratization as these shifts are operating concurrently with other dimensions of neoliberalization, notably commodification and privatization. Doing so would likely reveal still other ambivalent and contradictory outcomes with respect to equity or sustainability concerns.

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

Privatization, commodification and pricing of water and other resources

In terms of other trends associated with neoliberalization, specifically privatization, commodification and pricing of water, the gender and water literature is considerably less engaged. To speak to these issues, it is therefore necessary to draw from related debates, such as gender critiques of structural adjustment or gender and privatization debates (some of which focus on former communist spaces).

Van Wijk et al. (1996) have suggested that given that women make up a greater percentage of impoverished populations, that they often have less access to money than men and that the income they do have is more likely to be earmarked for specific uses, there may be disproportionate effects of water pricing or commodification for women and children (a similar conclusion is reached by Ahlers 2002). Work by Williams (1996–97) also suggests that privatization trends are likely to be harmful to women, conclusions that are reinforced by work on gender and water from Latin America and other contexts (e.g. selections in Whiteford and Melville 2002). For instance, Ahlers (2002) suggests that resource privatization in Mexico has not brought greater access for women unless they had access to financial resources already in hand. Perhaps because of the differential impact of privatization and commodification on men and women and the different roles men and women have with respect to water needs, women have emerged at the forefront of resistance to these trends and have been well represented in protest movements across contexts (see Bennett, Davila-Poblete, and Rico 2005).

Also of interest here, Lastarria-Cornhiel (1997) considers the gender implications of the privatization and marketization of land tenure. She writes, 'During the transition from customary tenure to private property systems, women tend to lose the few rights they had under customary tenure and do not gain the rights that, theoretically at least, every person has in a private property and market system' (Lastarria-Cornhiel 1997, 1326). As part of her explanation, she argues that with customary arrangements there is often interest in ensuring that the needs of all community members are met. With private property, cash cropping and other changes that increase the value of land, it is more likely that men or community elites will assert their land rights rather than continue to meet the needs of women and children as might have been expected under customary systems. Further, she notes that lack of access to capital and demands on women's labor are among a host of reasons why women are less likely to secure land rights in a privatized scheme, even though that ability may be legally and theoretically possible. This resonates with the results of Ahlers (2002, 2005) discussed above, following the privatization of land and water rights in Mexico. Work on the Gambia by Schroeder (1999) and Carney (1996) has also documented similar occurrences whereby agroforestry projects and new irrigation schemes led to emphasis on high value crops among male agriculturalists, which in turn led to gender conflicts over women's labor and land uses. Echoing similar conclusions from works on gender, women and privatization based on the experiences of transition in post-Soviet contexts, Hopkins (1995) offers a critique of the differential impacts of these shifts on women. In short, the diminished state provision of services such as childcare disproportionately affects women, who are asked to pick up these responsibilities in the state's absence. Also drawing on post-Soviet examples, Liborakina (2001) argues that changes with transition may result in contradictory outcomes for women's interests, at once providing both new access to resources and further marginalization. For instance, even as women may gain new rights with privatization, she argues that women may not have the resources and knowledge to maintain these rights, which may result in women selling off their rights at low prices (again suggesting parallels with the example of

Mexican agriculturalists; Ahlers 2002). Such examples support the idea that rights alone are insufficient, as there also need to be resources and means to maintain rights.

It is also worth noting that a number of works expressly challenge the assumed benefits of privatized or water pricing schema (Kasrils 2001), particularly assumptions that these mechanisms improve possibilities for 'sustainability' (e.g. Kurschner-Pelkmann 2006; Wilder and Romero Lankao 2006). Together with several decades of work on common property resources (see Schlager and Ostrom 1992; Ostrom 1990), these works offer sufficient reason to challenge the idea that privatized management is more likely to instill proper incentives or promote success in resource governance, however defined (see also recent special issue of *Antipode* on 'Privatization and the remaking of nature–society', edited by Mansfield 2007). Even with adequate recognition of the possible risks and contradictory tendencies related to the privatization and commodification of water, more work is needed to evaluate these trends and possibilities, particularly paying attention to socio-economic differences and inequalities.

To return to my argument about what might be gained through further engagement between neoliberal natures and gender/nature and gender/water debates, this overview of the state of knowledge suggests several possible benefits of rapprochement. Framing discussions more fully in relation to neoliberalization debates might enable more adequate consideration of cross-scalar and multi-sited connections, such as how might trends in Bolivia and Mexico be linked, given World Bank imposed conditionalities or the influence of policy debates, even as they necessarily differ? Or, how might the histories of liberal ideals related to individual rights central to neoliberalism (in the Ahlers (2002) case, the basis for formal entitlements in Mexico) mesh with the broader political economic context of uncertainty for agriculturalists in the face of NAFTA, the World Trade Organization and other processes also associated with evolving neoliberalisms? Further still, how might understanding hybridities and the contradictions associated with neoliberalism inform feminist analyses, enabling us to make sense of a 'neoliberal' situation where individuated rights were granted only to give way to (supposedly gender-neutral) market mechanisms that afforded lower prices to female sellers? Other themes of interest to the neoliberal natures literature would also be interesting to pursue from a gender and water perspective, for instance, those related to emergent citizen subjectivities or gendered resistance to neoliberalization processes. While I am arguing that more work along these lines would enrich our understanding considerably, I have also tried to show that examples currently available do offer us some initial basis from which to contextualize what neoliberalization of water governance might mean for gender and equity perspectives.

Gender and water approaches: silent complicities and revisiting terms

I have already noted the contribution of McCarthy (2005a) regarding ways that community forestry discourses in North America share foundational elements of neoliberalism, with both labeling the state ineffective and situating the 'community' as the necessary scale to achieve efficiency in resource management. Work by Bacchi and Eveline (2003) on gender mainstreaming similarly argues that some gender approaches share elements with neoliberalism, particularly consistent visions in terms of roles for the state and market. As they argue, gender-mainstreaming approaches do not necessarily offer a challenge to neoliberal agendas, but instead often facilitate the extension of markets. In a parallel sense, I detail here several ways that the gender and water literature implicitly endorses several foundational elements of neoliberalization trends. Specifically, discourses common to this literature share a focus on community participation,

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

highlighting the need to shift towards greater civil society responsibility for maintenance and provision of water services, and also focus on individuated rights and responsibilities with respect to resource governance, sharing ideals of 'rational individuated subjects'. Perhaps of greatest concern, there is also considerable emphasis on property rights among gender and environment theorists, implicitly endorsing narrowly conceptualized marketized approaches to nature–society relations in ways that may serve to foreclose open-access, community rights or other alternative approaches. I detail each of these elements in turn.

Civil society responsibility

As noted, much of the gender and water literature focuses on the need for enhanced participation of women in water governance. Part and parcel of these arguments is the common assumption that increased participation of women is beneficial, for the individual women and for gender equity goals, with respect to the effectiveness of these governance institutions or even sustainability of water resources. For example, Lobo and Samuel (2001) assert that decentralized management is essential to allow communities, and women in particular, to benefit from water resources. She suggests that greater participation leads both to empowerment of women and also to enhanced sustainability of the resource. Lobo is not alone in making these types of claims. Indeed, there are innumerable examples of works that imply a link between women's role in water or resource management, women's empowerment and more general benefits (see also Schneiderman and Reddock 2004).[11]

Even apart from this critique it is clear that there is little evidence to support many of the benefits assumed to flow from the enhanced participation of women and underrepresented community members. There is therefore a need for caution with respect to the ways that women's participation and labor may be enrolled in resource governance (see Cornwall 2004). For example, women's labor requirements may make it difficult for them to take on these additional responsibilities, given contributions to households and communities already performed (Lind 2002). Further, in the absence of sufficient resources or knowledge, transfer of responsibility to communities and users might be 'destined to fail', as illustrated with the Southern African case of state hand-off of irrigation infrastructure to communities in a state of 'near total collapse' (Ferguson and Malwafu 2001). In the case of devolved responsibility for handpumps in Sierra Leone as well, communities lacked funds and capacity to maintain the pumps (Magrath 2006). These examples are similar to other trends associated with neoliberalized natures whereby local actors are given further responsibility without the power, resources or tools necessary for management (Perrault and Martin 2005, 197).

Another important point to consider in relation to neoliberalization is the focus on enhanced participation of women and communities in resource management. The interest in broadening and deepening participation effectively constitutes a shift from state responsibility and service provision to the idea that women, the poor and other community members have the time, the wherewithal and responsibility to manage resources (Lind 2002). This is consistent with notions of 'self sufficiency' and citizen responsibility associated with neoliberal logics and policies (Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard 2006; Brown 2003). By extension, any 'failures' with respect to the management of these resources can be attributed to the ineffectiveness or 'lack' of these populations. Gender and water theorists should take from this that it is not only imperative to think about *how and why* to extend participation possibilities to women and other marginalized members of communities, but to also consider the implications of these shifts, including connections

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

to the broader neoliberal landscape. Given that neoliberalization shifts in water governance are often justified precisely because of a lack of resources to ensure proper maintenance or continued service provision (whether because of state debt or because of 'failure' of a water system), and that neoliberal shifts are often being forced in the context of financial and political crisis (Structural Adjustment Programs enforced by international financial institutions), attention to these concerns is all the more critical.

Individuated citizen subjects

Research on gender and the environment often endorses the idea that women should be given rights to land and water to be able to enhance their bargaining position and to improve their status in the household and community. Perhaps the most notable examples are discussions related to 'a field of one's own' (Agarwal 1994) adapted as 'a plot of one's own' (Zwarteveen 1996) and a 'well of one's own' (Jordans and Zwarteveen 1997). Agarwal (1995, 264), for example, writes extensively on the 'gender gap in ownership of property as the single most important contribution to economic well-being, social status and empowerment'. With these sorts of assertions, there is considerable attention paid in the literature to mechanisms that give women access to property ownership, to possibilities for overcoming barriers that keep women from realizing their formal inheritance rights and related concerns. While certainly there is a need to understand why women are barred from effective title or access to land and water rights, and attention to overcoming barriers for resource entitlement is justifiable on many fronts, there is again a need for caution with respect to the normative implications of these assertions. Specifically, there is a need to be deliberate about how and why theorists advocate for women to have *separate* and *individuated* rights, distinct from families, communities or cooperative arrangements. This is not to deny that the granting of individual rights may be critical. However, there is a need to consider whether or not to focus on the rights of the *individual* and if this has the effect of implicitly endorsing some of the fundamental bases of neoliberalism. Does an exclusive focus on individual rights have the effect of foreclosing other types of household, communal, open-access or cooperative access that could represent viable alternatives to individuated holdings that are at the core of private property and similar regimes?[12] Again, the work on Common Property Resources is instructive here, helping to demonstrate possibilities for effective community-based and informal management (e.g. Ostrom 1990) in ways that counter the 'tragedy of the commons' or similar neoliberal assumptions, particularly those that might instill a sense of necessity, inevitability or naturalness related to privatization schema (cf. Mansfield 2004).

With this focus on the individual, it perhaps deserves acknowledging that much feminist ink has been committed to illustrating the dangers of assuming a unitary household and to arguing for the need to disaggregate analyses to be attentive to differentiated needs of household members (e.g. Seiz 1995). However, it remains an open question as to whether an exclusive focus on 'individuated woman' is the appropriate or sole alternative to problematic assumptions of unitary households. To put the focus on the individual into question is again a consideration that is particularly important given the extensive and persistent neoliberalization of 'natures', often endorsing and naturalizing the idea that individuals alone may hold rights of access, making other possible tenure futures fade from view. These issues are also reflective of critiques of neoliberalism that have highlighted discourses and practices through which individuals are increasingly situated as responsible for their own care and therefore should not depend on 'community' or 'state'.[13]

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

Interestingly, part of Agarwal's (1995) argument is that it is imperative to grant land rights to the poor and to women, particularly as communal land is increasingly privatized. She therefore is pointing to increasing marginalization of populations under emergent resource regimes to argue for the need to assert individual tenure rights. My aim here is to suggest that there may be other responses that do not accept the primacy of the individual or privatization of land or water as *prior* conditions, but rather work to keep open other possible alternative configurations, including those that might more easily serve equity or other goals.

Marketization, property rights and disenfranchisement

As is clear from the above discussion, there is a link between a focus on individuated rights and broader endorsement of private property and marketization models, a point I develop further here. Consider the work of Vermillion (1999), who argues that with devolution, private property rights must be ensured to provide the necessary security and incentives for farmers to invest in irrigation management. Similarly, work by Ngware (2004) from Tanzania argues that decentralization leads to greater accountability and transparency, thereby benefiting women. These are excellent examples to illustrate my general point of the need for caution or at least self-reflection with respect to what ideas are implicitly authorized in our discussions. In Vermillion's (1999) discussion, for instance, there is a clear endorsement of the idea of marketized property rights,[14] rather than a notion of public access or 'citizenship rights' to resources (see Bakker 2003).

Another focus of the gender and water literature that also appears to implicitly endorse marketization trends is the suggestion that water priorities need to include income generating aspects of women's water uses, rather than assuming that women only need to access water for domestic needs. The argument appears straightforward. For instance, in a discussion of gender and water reforms in Zimbabwe provided by Manase (2003), the argument is made that attention should not only focus on domestic needs (e.g. drinking water), but there needs to be attention paid to strategic needs (e.g. water uses that would lead to income generation for women). In essence, the provision of domestic needs is insufficient as there also needs to be a prioritization of water uses that may result in income generation for women, resulting in an improved bargaining position and status in the household or community. This argument is familiar to anyone engaged in discussions related to shifts from WID 'women in development' to GAD, 'gender and development' perspectives. However, caution is again needed. With endorsements of the need to prioritize 'productive' and 'income generating' aspects of water use, there is the potential of augmenting a trend underway with a contemporary focus on 'full cost recovery' for water delivery and similar moves that have historically led to preference for men's water uses. As others have argued, 'cost recovery' and related neoliberalization shifts have the effect of encouraging industrial, agricultural and other 'productive' uses of water, and devaluing other water needs including drinking water, critical for health and similar concerns (Lane and Jarman 1998; see also Zwarteveen 1998), especially for those without property rights or access to financial capital (Ahlers 2002).[15]

It is interesting to evaluate these discussions to consider the degree to which they buy into the very logics of neoliberalism, for instance, the idea that private property is necessary and that it serves as a foundation for effective resource management. At once, these discourses and policy prescriptions have the effect of solidifying the foundations of neoliberalism, while possibly foreclosing other possibilities associated with communal, cooperative or other management regimes. In this critique, I take a cue from Bromley

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

(2007), who refutes the narrow framing that privatization regimes are necessary for efficiency goals (see also Mansfield 2004, 2007). Instead, Bromley suggests that there are a number of institutional arrangements that might serve efficiency goals, opening up the field of possibilities with respect to tenure considerations, rights regimes and resource management arrangements. Shiva (1998) similarly broadens the field of possibility with respect to rights mechanisms that might promote effective and equitable resource management. In her discussion, she offers the example of communal management mechanisms, particularly those that can ensure that all members of the community will continue to have access in the future.

Returning to the example from Mexico whereby women gained land and water rights, only to sell them off for a low price in a short time, there are clearly risks associated with property rights operationalized in individuated and market terms. As Ahlers (2002, 2005), Lastarria-Cornhiel (1997) and others have noted, focus on formal rights may undermine informal mechanisms and social networks where women may have been able to gain access historically. I do not want to overstate the need for caution with respect to these issues, but I do consider that there is reason to pause to consider the effects these implicit endorsements may have. As others have noted, it is important to be attentive to ways that neoliberalization processes rescript water users as 'consumers' rather than 'collective citizens' (Bakker 2003, 39), women as 'consumers' rather than as a 'protected' or 'equity group' (Bacchi and Eveline 2003, 106) or more general shifts whereby there is no longer the idea of a 'body politic' but only individuals and 'consumers' (Brown 2003). Along these lines, it is imperative to critically evaluate what 'gender and resource' theorists implicitly authorize, particularly if policy prescriptions seem to augment and enforce these trends. I highlight the specific examples cited not to argue against these theorists, but rather to pose the question as to whether we are willing to unquestioningly accept broader shifts already underway that highlight 'productive' water uses or that valorize 'market citizenship' as the only viable options (cf. Schild 2000).

As discussed in the introduction, it is critical that studies of neoliberalism make progress to analyze the specific practices, policies and discourses through which market relations, individual subjectivities or notions of state failure become normalized. My purpose here is to argue that gender and nature theorists should be attentive to ways that the arguments we advance may further naturalize these ideas, rather than calling them into question. To the extent that we implicitly endorse elements foundational to neoliberalism, we might foreclose options and alternatives, including those that could be critical for equity goals. Again, especially as neoliberalization proceeds in ways that appear to suggest *there are no alternatives*, it is particularly critical that feminists and others should be actively engaged in exploring any and all possible alternatives, rather than affirming notions of individuated property rights or markets as a priori starting points to discuss equity and empowerment.

Conclusions: learning across neoliberalized natures, gender and inequality debates

There appears to be ample reason for gender and water theorists to be more explicit and reflexive in relation to assumptions and prescriptions. Among other issues, there is a need to detail why *water rights*, and specifically *individuated water rights*, constitute the 'solution'. Or similarly, there is a need to be attentive to the ambivalent, hybrid and contradictory character of enhanced women's participation, including the ways that this may divest responsibility from state management, or shift responsibility or blame to women and other marginalized members of society. This sort of reflexivity and care in our

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

discussions will enable reconsideration of nature–society relations from a gender perspective, rather than just including women and gender concerns in a debate where terms have already been established. There is also a need for greater care with respect to evidence for how participation, tenure rights or other issues matter for equity, sustainability or other concerns. Indeed, work along these lines must be more careful in distinguishing between these goals, as they cannot be considered as a unified ensemble. Unfortunately, the literature remains replete with assertions that do not go far enough in terms of how certain practices link to particular goals or why certain outcomes are likely to be more beneficial than others.

Another central point to distill from the preceding discussion is that the time is ripe for these sorts of interventions, particularly for careful thinking that is geared towards opening up new spaces and opportunities, rather than operating from within the terms of a debate dominated by normalized and hegemonic neoliberal prescriptions. How can feminist and gender theorists be at the forefront of opening up new fields of possibility with respect to nature–society relations precisely at a moment when they otherwise appear to be increasingly circumscribed? The context in which neoliberalization is unfolding is key. Given the specific histories and vulnerabilities that have paved the way for neoliberal reform in many contexts (e.g. debt crises, Import Substitution Industrialization policies and histories of colonialism in Latin America; see Perrault and Martin 2005, or general discussion in Brenner, Peck, and Theodore forthcoming), many of the issues I have raised are all the more pressing. In many ways the context in which these shifts are unfolding already makes the possibilities of 'success' for resource management regimes exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, given the indebtedness and lack of resources and uneven fields of power with respect to structural adjustment programs (SAPs) being promoted by international financial institutions (see discussions on SAP imposition and water privatization in Ghana by Amena-Etego and Grusky 2005; in Mexico by Ahlers 2005; as well as the role of institutions such as the World Bank in such efforts in Goldman 2007). Research needs to take seriously the march and extent of neoliberalization reforms, with specific attention being paid to gender and inequality, to take more notice of the vulnerabilities and crises that have paved the way for these shifts to be adopted from the outset.

The benefits of cross-fertilization between the concerns of these literatures are clearly not one-way. As social service provision or infrastructure of centralized governments are 'rolled-back' and as focus is placed on cost recovery, efficiency and stable investment frontiers, attentiveness to gender and inequality is crucial. Returning to a suggestion I offered in the introduction, it seems that there are also particular contributions that feminist and gender approaches might offer to studies of neoliberalism, and neoliberalization and nature. Indeed, just as gender and resource theorists have not been appropriately attentive to neoliberalism, there is a surprisingly sparse treatment of gender and inequality in fields of study related to neoliberalism and neoliberalized natures – exceptions include work by Peterson (2005) among others. Brown (2006) has suggested that neoliberalism has no interest in equality, a comment which highlights the urgent need for gender approaches and other studies of inequality with respect to analyzing emergent political, economic and governance trends. As Peterson (2005), Eschle (2004) and others argue, attempts to make gender inequalities central to understandings of neoliberalism should be a priority, especially as elements of economism, neoliberalism and globalization may rely on, and retrench, inequalities and socio-political difference (e.g. gender, race, class). Indeed, Eschle goes so far as to suggest that feminist resistance is likely to be imperative to any effective challenge of neoliberal orthodoxies. While feminist approaches are making inroads in neoliberalization debates, this focus remains relatively

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

absent in neoliberalized nature subfields. Among other benefits, increased cross-fertilization might enable more adequate attention to intersectionality with respect to multiple dimensions of difference. A broader feminist toolkit could also be used to address, both conceptually and theoretically, questions about shifting identities and subjectivities in relation to neoliberalism – issues which have garnered increasing interest as of late. Further, just as feminist critiques of science have been instrumental in highlighting exclusions and omissions with respect to 'truth claims' and knowledge production, it also seems that feminist work has a critical role to play in highlighting foreclosures and naturalized 'truths' that proceed apace with neoliberalization. The focus on 'variegated neoliberalisms' (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore forthcoming) is relevant here. As they discuss, any theorization of neoliberalism must deal with variegation, including the ways neoliberal projects exploit, transform and reproduce inherited geo-institutional differences. Their assertion that variegation is *necessary* to any adequate theorization of neoliberalization processes and outcomes is one that can apply to variegation across contexts and institutional landscapes (as they stress), but can also be thought of with respect to socio-spatial differences and inequalities at multiple scales, including within households or communities.

As other political ecological works have emphasized, nature materialities are also likely to be of considerable import for these discussions. This is particularly the case if we consider that 'water' is never only important in biophysical dimensions, but is always embedded in socio-cultural and economic networks (see Bakker 2003; Sneddon et al. 2002). As a flow resource that links activities and places, and that travels through production and consumption chains, debates about the future of water governance are necessarily inflected by interest in social equity, concern for health and well-being, as well as ecosystem and species futures. Some have suggested in fact that water is an element of 'nature' where the limitations of neoliberal frameworks and understandings can clearly be brought to light. Bakker (2005) and Prudham (2004) argue that water is particularly difficult for the extraction of profit, among other elements of water materialities that condition crises and challenge neoliberal frameworks. Given the socio-natural importance of water and the potentially poor match between profit imperatives and water delivery, we have already seen considerable protest among communities and activists from Bolivia to Ghana to India. Water, perhaps more than other domains of 'nature', thus brings to light the need to connect socio-political inequality and differentiated outcomes of neoliberalized natures. Given the crucial concerns related to uncertain water futures, we must continue to search for tools and approaches that will enliven discussions of alternatives, rather than foreclosing such possibilities from the outset.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the organizers of the 'Gender and Water Geographies' sessions at the Association of American Geographers (AAG) meetings in San Francisco, 2007. I would like to acknowledge Becky Mansfield, Haripriya Rangan, and Jamie Peck for helpful comments. My particular thanks also to Whitney Gantt for the research assistance that was necessary to actualize this article, and to George Allez, Robyn Longhurst, Kathleen O'Reilly, and three anonymous reviewers for considerable efforts to sharpen the arguments presented here.

Notes

1. It is important to note that neoliberalization does not signal wholesale movement away from state capacity or administration. As Peck (2001), Mansfield (2006) and others have argued,

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

rather than an absence of state institutions and governance, neoliberal shifts typically entail reconfigurations of administrative function or capacity.

2. Peck and Tickell (2002), among others, have argued that attention should be paid to the geographical and historical constitution of *processes of neoliberalization*, including ways that variable and local neoliberalization processes are embedded in wider networks and structures of neoliberalism.
3. It is noteworthy that Castree (2006) has questioned the feasibility of comparative or linked studies. Goldman's (2007) recent analysis of policy networks and World Bank water policies that connect the North and South offers one promising example of this type of work to date (see also Martin 2005).
4. The figures cited by Goldman (2007, 790) suggest that fewer than 51 million people globally were receiving water from private companies in 1990, mostly in the US and Europe. Ten years later, this number was closer to 460 million and is expected to reach 1.16 billion by 2015. Much of the rapid privatization of water over the past several decades has been in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and, as Goldman explains in detail, loan conditionalities, training efforts of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and its role in consolidating international expert networks have been key reasons for the rapid water privatization shifts.
5. At once, neoliberalization trends may involve devolution, privatization and commodification trends (with concomitant reduction of state capacity and heightened role for market instruments), and more celebrated moves associated with 'democratization' and 'civil society' engagement. Thus, neoliberalization processes are often contradictory, involving changes that may be at once emancipatory, liberating and disciplinary (see discussion of Dolhinow in Power 2005 related to tendencies for neoliberalism to be both 'liberating' and 'oppressive', or Raco 2005 for a discussion of ways that democratization efforts may provide certain liberties to citizens while also ushering in new forms of discipline).
6. Similar arguments can be found with respect to environmental dimensions of 'sustainable development' in Hartwick and Peet (2003). As they argue, environmental concerns have become a critical component of the ideological and institutional framework of neoliberalism.
7. The 'Dublin Principles' refers to the four international principles for water governance agreed upon in 1992 at the Conference on Water and the Environment. In brief, the principles are: 1) That fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment. 2) Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy makers at all levels. 3) Women play a central role in the provision, management and safe-guarding of water. 4) Water has economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good.
8. IMT refers to the treatment of water as an economic good and decentralization of resource management. In other words, neoliberal reforms in the irrigation sector.
9. Similar arguments are made in more general senses with respect to the need to ensure rights commensurate with responsibilities (Meinzen-Dick and Knox 2001), or ways that decentralization efforts fail when there is insufficient power transfer accompanying these shifts (Ribot 2006).
10. Explicit acknowledgement of risks of devolved resource governance has received increasing attention in the literature, including focus on enhanced corruption possibilities (Upadhyay 2004), increasing burdens on community resources (Ferguson and Malwafu 2001, including women's labor and time), potential that local elites may benefit disproportionately or possibilities that socio-economic inequalities may be aggravated (Ribot 2004 provides useful overviews of all of these issues).
11. Along these lines Ennis-McMillan (2005) makes the provocative suggestion that women's participation in water management in Mexico resulted in greater possibilities for their participation in other democratic political realms (for a point of comparison, Prokopy 2004, writing from the Indian context, suggests that there is little evidence to support such possibilities).
12. See related critique in Ahlers (2002) in terms of potential for focus on the individual associated with neoliberalism to undermine communal and familial relations.
13. To provide a specific example from the gender and water literature, Assaad et al. (1994) argue directly that women must learn self-help techniques to solve water problems and should no longer rely on the government.

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

14. It is also notable given my earlier discussion that this author also endorses the ideas that devolution will likely lead to cost-effectiveness, improved productivity and sustainability, as well as supporting notions of greater 'self-reliance' among users.
15. In a related discussion, Kasrils (2001) considers cost recovery efforts, arguing that they often ignore poverty. As a consequence, he argues for subsidies or other mechanisms for the poor to be able to access safe water under pricing schemes.

Notes on contributor

Leila M. Harris is an Assistant Professor of Geography and Environmental Studies at UW-Madison. She works at the intersection of nature–society approaches, issues related to gender, ethnicity and socio-political inequality, and critical development studies. Among other research efforts, her work includes attention to socio-political and institutional dimensions of environmental and developmental change in Turkey. She has also written on debates related to water politics in the Middle East, and water and conflict questions. More recent work has examined gender-environment debates, socio-spatial dimensions of environmental politics and activism, and emergent water governance trends. Articles on these themes have appeared in journals including *Environment and Planning D*, *Geoforum*, *Society and Natural Resources*, and *Local Environment*.

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

References

Agarwal, Bina. 1994. *A field of one's own: Gender and land rights in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1995. Gender, property and land rights: Bridging a critical gap in economic analysis and policy. In *Out of the margin: Feminist perspectives on economics*, ed. E. Kuiper and J. Sap, 264–88. London: Routledge.

———. 2001. Participatory exclusions, community forestry, and gender: An analysis for South Asia and a conceptual framework. *World Development* 29: 1623–48.

Ahlers, Rhodante. 2002. Moving in or staying out: Gender dimensions of water markets. In *Protecting a sacred gift: Water and social change in Mexico*, ed. Scott Whiteford and Roberto Melville, 65–86. San Diego: Center for US–Mexico Studies at UC–San Diego.

———. 2005. Gender dimensions of neoliberal water policy in Mexico and Bolivia: Empowering or disempowering? In *Opposing currents: The politics of water and gender in Latin America*, ed. V. Bennett, S. Davila-Poblete, and M. Nieves Rico, 53–71. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Amena-Etego, Rudolf, and Sara Grusky. 2005. The new face of conditionalities: The World Bank and water privatization in Ghana. In *The age of commodity: Water privatization in southern Africa*, ed. D. McDonald and G. Ruiters, 275–90. Camden: Earthscan.

Assaad, M., S. El-Katsha, and S. Watts. 1994. Involving women in water and sanitation initiatives: An action/research project in an Egyptian village. *Water International* 19, no. 3: 113–120.

Bacchi, Carol, and Joan Eveline. 2003. Mainstreaming and neoliberalism: A contested relationship. *Policy and society: Journal of public, foreign and global policy* 22, no. 2: 98–118.

Bakker, Karen J. 2003. A political ecology of water privatization. *Studies in Political Economy* 70: 35–58.

———. 2005. Neoliberalizing nature? Market environmentalism in water supply in England and Wales. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95, no. 3: 542–65.

———. 2007. The 'commons' versus the 'commodity': Alter-globalization, anti-privatization and the human right to water in the global South. *Antipode* 39, no. 3: 430–55.

Bakker, Karen, and Gavin Bridge. 2006. Material worlds? Resource geographies and the 'matter of nature'. *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 1: 5–27.

Bennett, Vivienne, Sonia Davila-Poblete, and Maria Nieves Rico, eds. 2005. *Opposing currents: The politics of water and gender in Latin America*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Boelens, Rutgerd, and Margreet Zwarteveen. 2005. Prices and politics in Andean water reforms. *Development and Change* 36, no. 4: 735–58.

Brenner, Neil, Jamie Peck, and Nik Theodore. forthcoming. Variegated neoliberalization: Geographies, modalities, pathways. *Global Networks*.

Bromley, Daniel. 2008. Land and economic development: New institutional arrangements for the 21st century. In *Towards a vision of land in 2015*, ed. G.C. Cornia and J. Riddellca, 217–36. Boston: Lincoln Institute.

Brown, Wendy. 2003. Neo-liberalism and the end of liberal democracy. *Theory and Event* 7, no. 1: 1–19.

———. 2006. American nightmare: Neoliberalism, neoconservatism, and de-democratization. *Political Theory* 34, no. 6: 690–714.

Budds, Jessica, and Gordon McGranahan. 2003. Are the debates on water privatization missing the point? Experiences from Africa, Asia and Latin America. *Environment and Urbanization* 15, no. 2: 87–113.

Carney, Judith. 1996. Converting the wetlands, engendering the environment: The intersection of gender with agrarian change in the Gambia. In *Liberation ecologies*, ed. R. Peet and M. Watts, 165–87. London: Routledge.

Castree, Noel. 2006. From neoliberalism to neoliberalisation: Consolations, confusions, and necessary illusions. *Environment and Planning A* 38, no. 1: 1–6.

Cornwall, Andrea. 2004. New democratic spaces? The politics and dynamics of institutionalised participation. *IDS Bulletin* 35, no. 2: 1–10.

Cornwall, Andrea, and John Gaventa. 2001. Bridging the gap: Citizenship, participation and accountability. *PLA Notes* 40: 32–5.

Devasia, Leelamaa. 1998. Safe drinking water and its acquisition: Rural women's participation in water management in Maharashtra, India. *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 14, no. 4: 537–46.

Ennis-McMillan, Michael. 2005. Women, equity, and household water management in the valley of Mexico. In *Opposing currents: The politics of water and gender in Latin America*, ed. V. Bennett, S. Davila-Poblete, and M. Nieves Rico, 137–53. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Eschle, Catherine. 2004. Feminist studies of globalisation: Beyond gender, beyond economism? *Global Society* 18, no. 2: 97–125.

Ferguson, Anne E., and Wapulumuka Mulwafu. 2001. Decentralization, participation and access to water resources in Malawi. In *Broadening access and strengthening input market systems*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center.

Goldman, M. 2007. How 'Water for all!' policy became hegemonic: The power of the World Bank and its transnational policy networks. *Geoforum* 38: 786–800.

Harris, Leila M. 2005. Negotiating inequalities: Democracy, gender, and the politics of difference in water user groups in southeastern Turkey. In *Turkish environmentalism: Between democracy and development*, ed. F. Adaman and M. Arsel, 185–200. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Hartwick, E., and R. Peet. 2003. Neoliberalism and nature: The case of the WTO. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 590: 188–211.

Heynen, Nik, James McCarthy, Scott Prudham and Paul Robbins, eds. 2007. *Neoliberal environments: False promises and unnatural consequences*. New York: Routledge.

Hopkins, Barbara E. 1995. Women and children last: A feminist redefinition of privatization and economic reform. In *Out of the margin: Feminist perspectives on economics*, ed. E. Kuiper and J. Sap, 249–63. London: Routledge.

Jordans, Eva, and Margreet Zwarteveen. 1997. *A well of one's own: Gender analysis of an irrigation program in Bangladesh*. Colombo: Grameen Krishi Foundation and International Irrigation Management Institute.

Kasrils, Ronnie. 2001. The value and price of water (The women of Lutsheko). *Water Science and Technology* 43, no. 4: 51–5.

Katz, Cindi. 2005. Partners in crime? Neoliberalism, and the production of new political subjectivities. *Antipode* 37, no. 3: 623–31.

Kulipossa, Fidelx P. 2004. Decentralization and democracy in developing countries: An overview. *Development in Practice* 14, no. 6: 768–808.

Kurschner-Pelkmann, Frank. 2006. Untold strengths. *D + C, Development and Cooperation* 33, no. 3: 110–3.

Lahiri-Dutt, Kuntala. 2003. Reflections on water: Gender and governance in Indian development. *Development Bulletin* 63: 50–4.

Lane, Jon, and Julie Jarman. 1998. Six years on – what happened to the Dublin principles? *Waterlines* 16, no. 3: 10–11.

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

Larner, Wendy. 2003. Neoliberalism? *Environment and planning. D. Society and space* 21: 509–12.
Lastarria-Cornhiel, Susanna. 1997. Impact of privatization on gender and property rights in Africa. *World Development* 25, no. 8: 1317–33.
Leitner, Helga, Jamie Peck, and Eric Sheppard, eds. 2006. *Contesting neoliberalism: Urban frontiers*. New York and London: Guilford Press.
Liborakina, Marina. 2001. The social consequences of privatization for women. *Problems of economic transition* 43, no. 9: 34–46.
Lind, Amy. 2002. Making feminist sense of neoliberalism: The institutionalization of women's struggles for survival in Ecuador and Bolivia. *Journal of Developing Societies* 18, nos. 2–3: 228–58.
Liverman, Diana M., and Silvina Vilas. 2006. Neoliberalism and the environment in Latin America. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 31: 327–63.
Lobo, Crispino, and Abraham Samuel. 2001. Slaking thirst – retrieving desertified living spaces. Watershed development saves Indian villages. *D + C, Development and Cooperation* 4: 8–13.
Magrath, John. 2006. Towards sustainable water-supply solutions in rural Sierra Leone. *OXFAM research report: OXFAM and Water Aid*.
Manase, Gift, Jerry Ndamba, and Fungai Makoni. 2003. Mainstreaming gender in integrated water resources management: The case of Zimbabwe. *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth* 28, nos. 20–27: 967–71.
Mansfield, Becky. 2004. Neoliberalism in the oceans: 'rationalization', property rights, and the commons question. *Geoforum* 35, no. 3: 313–26.
———. 2006. Assessing market-based environmental policy using a case study of North Pacific fisheries. *Global Environmental Change* 16, no. 1: 29–39.
———, ed. 2007. Special issue on privatization: Property and the remaking of nature-society relations. *Antipode* 39, no. 3.
Martin, Patricia. 2005. Comparative topographies of neoliberalism in Mexico. *Environment and planning A* 37: 203–20.
McCarthy, James. 2005a. Devolution in the woods: Community forestry as hybrid neoliberalism. *Environment and Planning A* 37: 995–1014.
———. 2005b. Commons as counterhegemonic projects. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 16, no. 1: 9–24.
Meinzen-Dick, Ruth, and Anna Knox. 2001. Collective action, property rights, and devolution of natural resource management: A conceptual framework. *CGIAR report*. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.
Meinzen-Dick, Ruth, and Margreet Zwarteveen. 2003. Gendered participation in water management: Issues from water users' associations in South Asia. In *Household decisions, gender, and development: A synthesis of recent research*, ed. A.R. Quisimbing, 153–8. Washington DC: IFPRI.
Mitchell, Katharyne. 2004. *Crossing the neoliberal line: Pacific Rim migration and the metropolis*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
Ngware, Neema M., and Suleiman S.A. Ngware. 2004. Poverty reduction through decentralization: A case study of the issues faced by women in the informal sector. *Regional Development Dialogue* 25, no. 1: 157–74.
Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Peck, Jamie. 2001. Neoliberalizing states: Thin policies/hard outcomes. *Progress in Human Geography* 25, no. 3: 445–55.
———. 2004. Geography and public policy: Constructions of neoliberalism. *Progress in Human Geography* 28, no. 3: 392–405.
Peck, Jamie, and Adam Tickell. 2002. Neoliberalizing space. *Antipode* 34, no. 3: 380–404.
Peterson, Spike. 2005. How (the meaning of) gender matters in political economy. *New Political Economy* 10, no. 4: 499–521.
Perrault, Thomas, and Patricia Martin. 2005. Special issue on geographies of neoliberalism in Latin America. *Environment and Planning A* 37.
Power, Marcus. 2005. Working the spaces of neoliberalism. *Antipode* 37, no. 3: 606–12.
Prokopy, Linda S. 2004. Women's participation in rural water supply projects in India: Is it moving beyond tokenism and does it matter? *Water Policy* 6, no. 2: 103–16.

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

Prudham, Scott. 2004. Poisoning the well: Neoliberalism and the contamination of municipal water in Walkerton, Ontario. *Geoforum* 35: 343–59.

Raco, Mike. 2005. Sustainable development, rolled-out neoliberalism and sustainable communities. *Antipode* 37, no. 2: 324–47.

Rankin, Katherine N. 2001. Governing development: Neoliberalism, microcredit, and rational economic woman. *Economy and Society* 30, no. 1: 18–37.

Rao, D. Vasudeva. 2001. Emancipation of poor through natural resource management – a case study in Andhra Pradesh. *Indian Journal of Social Development* 1, no. 2: 315–25.

Ribot, Jesse C. 1999. Decentralisation, participation and accountability in Sahelian forestry: Legal instruments of political administrative control. *Africa* 69, no. 1: 23–65.

———. 2004. *Waiting for democracy: The politics of choice in natural resource decentralization*. Washington DC: Water Resources.

———. 2006. Choose democracy: Environmentalists' socio-political responsibility. *Global Environmental Change* 16, no. 2: 115–9.

Robertson, Morgan. 2004. The neoliberalization of ecosystem services: Wetland mitigation banking and problems in environmental governance. *Geoforum* 35: 361–73.

Schlager, Edella, and Elinor Ostrom. 1992. Property rights regimes and natural resources: A conceptual analysis. *Land Economics* 68, no. 3: 249–62.

Sarin, Madhu. 1995. Regenerating India's forests: Reconciling gender equity with joint forest management. *IDS Bulletin* 26, no. 1: 83–91.

Schild, Veronica. 2000. Neo-liberalism's new gendered market citizens: The 'civilizing' dimension of social programmes in Chile. *Citizenship Studies* 4, no. 3: 275–305.

Schneiderman, Jill S., and Rhoda Reddock. 2004. Water, women and community in Trinidad, West Indies. *Natural Resources Forum* 28, no. 3: 179–88.

Schroeder, Richard. 1999. *Shady practices: Agroforestry, gender politics in the Gambia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Seiz, Janet. 1995. Bargaining models, feminism and institutionalism. *Journal of Economic Issues* 29, no. 2: 609–18.

Shiva, Vandana. 1998. Women's water rights. *Waterlines* 17, no. 1: 9–11.

Sneddon, Christopher, Leila Harris, Rado Dmitrov, and Uygar Özesmi. 2002. Contested waters: Social conflict, spatial scale and sustainability in aquatic systems. *Society and Natural Resources* 15: 663–75.

Tickell, Adam, and Jamie Peck. 2003. Making global rules: Globalization or neoliberalization? In *Remaking the global economy: Economic–geographical perspectives*, ed. J. Peck and H.W.-C. Yeung, 163–81. London: Sage.

Upadhyay, Bhawana. 2003. Water, poverty and gender: Review of evidences from Nepal, India and South Africa. *Water Policy* 5, no. 5: 503–11.

———. 2004. Gender roles and multiple uses of water in North Gujarat. Working paper 70. Gujarat, India: International Water Management Institute.

Van Wijk, Christine, Esther de Lange, and David Saunders. 1996. Gender aspects in the management of water. *Natural Resources Forum* 20, no. 2: 91–103.

Vermillion, Douglas. 1999. Property rights and collective action in the devolution of irrigation system management. In *CGIAR Systemwide Program on Collective Action and Property Rights*. Washington DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Whiteford, Scott, and Robert Melville, eds. 2002. *Protecting a sacred gift: Water and social change in Mexico*. San Diego: University of California, San Diego.

Wilder, Margaret, and Patricia Romero Lankao. 2006. Paradoxes of decentralization: Water reform and social implications in Mexico. *World Development* 34, no. 11: 1977–95.

Williams, Susan. 1996/97. Globalization, privatization, and a feminist public. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 4, no. 1: 97–105.

Zwarteveen, Margreet. 1996. A plot of one's own: Gender relations and irrigated land allocation policies in Burkina Faso. *IWMI Research Report Series I*, no. 10. Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Irrigation Management Institute.

———. 1998. Identifying gender aspects of new irrigation management policies. *Agriculture and Human Values* 15, no. 4: 301–12.

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

ABSTRACT TRANSLATION

El género y la gobernanza emergente del agua: una mirada comparativa de las naturalezas y las dimensiones de género neoliberalizadas de la privatización, la devolución y la mercantilización

Este artículo provee una lectura crítica de algunas de las dimensiones generizadas de regímenes emergentes de la gobernanza del agua, específicamente aquellos relacionados con la privatización, la mercantilización y la devolución del manejo de los recursos de agua. Luego de proveer primero una reseña de las recientes contribuciones sobre naturaleza-sociedad relacionadas con los procesos de la neoliberalización, el artículo evalúa, comparativamente, las ideas respecto de las dimensiones de género de los cambios recientes en la gobernanza del agua. Presento varios argumentos en la intersección de las literaturas relevantes. Primero, hay una necesidad de parte de los teóricos del género interesados en los debates sobre los recursos del agua y de naturaleza-sociedad, de involucrarse con más temas, teorías y procesos asociados con la neoliberalización. Segundo, hay una necesidad de mayor atención al género, la teoría feminista, y los enfoques de inequidad y diferencia socio-espacial en las discusiones sobre las naturalezas neoliberalizadas. Tercero, la lectura simultánea de estas literaturas revela que hay una necesidad de ser autorreflexivo/a y crítico/a de los elementos de la literatura sobre género y agua que avalan implícitamente elementos fundacionales del giro neoliberal en la gobernanza de los recursos. Finalmente, hay particularidades con respecto a la teoría y la política de género, y materialidades del agua que tienen importancia para entender los cambios recientes en la gobernanza del agua en el más amplio contexto de los cambios políticos y económicos asociados con la neoliberalización.

Palabras clave: género; gobernanza del agua; neoliberalización; privatización; devolución

Downloaded By: [Harris, Leila M.] At: 21:04 7 July 2009

性别和逐渐浮现的水治理：比较新自由主义化的大自然以及私有化，权力下放和市场化的性别层面

本文对逐渐浮现的水治理制度的性别层面作一个批判性的解读，特别是那些涉及到私有化，市场化以及权力下放的资源管理。首先，我会概述最近新自由主义过程对于自然-社会的相关贡献。之后，这篇文章将比较性地评估近期水治理变化的性 别 层面。我会以相关学术文献的交叉点为基础来提出几个论点。首先，对水资源以及自然-社会辩论感兴趣的性别理论家应该多接触关于新自由主义的课题，理论和过程。其次，新自由主义化的大自然之讨论有必要多关注性别议题，女性主义理论以及不平等和社会空间差异的观点。第三，综合了这些文献有助于显示我们需要自我反思和批判部分含隐约赞同资源管理新资本主义化的基本要素的性别与水研究。最后，性别理论与政治和水的物质性所持有的特殊点也应该受到重视。这是因为它们有助于了解近期水治理在新自由主义化所带动的广泛政治和经济变化的转移。

关键词：性别，水治理，新自由主义，私有化，权力下放